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AUTHOR Steinhoff, Mary E.
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ABSTRACT

A project was conducted to develop and implement a curriculum for a series of group sessions designed to assist students in associate degree nursing programs in the socialization process of becoming a nurse. During the curriculum development phase of the project, specific plans and procedures were formulated for 10 monthly sessions that were designated by the title "Discussion Time." The implementation or field testing phase of the project consisted of holding monthly discussions from August 1983 through and including May 1984 that were attended by 38 student nurses enrolled in the associate degree nursing program at East Central College in Union, Missouri. The project, which resulted in the development of a published curriculum guide, was deemed a success in that those students who participated in the initial series of Discussion Time meetings were able to emphasize, criticize, and support each other as they learned more about themselves and about how to manage the stresses of daily living. The Discussion Time curriculum appeared to ease the strain and inherent anxiety of the socialization process for these students. (MN)

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FINAL REPORT

Project No. 84-131/132-600-2(130-130)(A) - Discussion Time: A Developmental Project to Facilitate the Socialization of Associate Degree Nursing Students

Mary E. Steinhoff

East Central College

Union, Missouri

June 26, 1984

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ABSTRACT

The intent of this study was the development and implementation of a curriculum for a series of group sessions designed to assist the student in the socialization process of becoming a nurse. This was accomplished by the development and implementation of a curriculum for a series of sessions designated as 'Discussion Time', focusing upon the student developing self-awareness as a person and as an evolving nurse. Results were favorable, with feedback from students and faculty supporting the perceptions of the author/consultant that Discussion Time did ease the strain and anxiety generated by the socialization process. Further research is recommended to investigate both the effectiveness of Discussion Time and the transformations which the student undergoes while attaining professional socialization.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Nurse educators constantly face the issue of the socialization of student nurses and the tension and conflict which is a natural and predictable consequence of that process. Whether it be the beginning student entering the program or the student graduating, nurse educators must attend to this socialization process which interacts with and impinges upon the formal educational process.

Socialization, the process through which individuals prepare for the life roles that they will enact in their society is receiving increasing attention. Several authors (Simpson, 1967; Davis, 1966; Kramer, 1974) offer models to describe the course of socialization as a complex, sequential set of phases. While these models differ to lesser or greater degree, a common element is present. As an individual moves through the stages of socialization, there exists the repeated need to resolve incongruities between ideal images and real situations, generating considerable conflict and tension.

In nursing, two major socialization processes are described by researchers: (1) the initial adult socialization in which individuals are socialized into the profession through a formal educational process, and (2) the resocialization process that occurs as graduates leave their formal educational programs and enter work settings for the first time. What occurs during these two socialization processes is crucial to the development and maintenance of professional values in nursing practice and ultimately, to the delivery of nursing care. Therefore, it is most important that attention be given to the resulting tension and conflict generated by the socialization process so that a favorable outcome be facilitated.

Compounding the resulting tension and conflict generated by the socialization process are the student's developmental and situational crises.

Student nurses confront various complex situations, attempting to deal with anxiety, anger, sadness, and joy in helping patients at all intervals of the health-illness continuum. In his/her nursing care, the student must be able to examine his/her own feelings and reactions as a person, as well as his/her actions as a professional provider of care. The importance of self-awareness in quality nursing care is stressed and yet the nursing literature is seriously lacking in references that develop the concept of self-awareness and its application to nursing. Furthermore, the student's curriculum is burdened with tasks and reports that allow little time for quiet reflection leading to self-growth.

The student's dilemma of attempting to cope with the tensions of becoming a nurse and learning the realities of the nursing role is soon a problem for the nurse educator. How many incidents of poor performance in either the classroom or practicum setting are a result of the dynamics operating within the student to resolve or manage the high level of stress? While an educator attempts to help the student cope with this stress on a day-to-day basis, due to time and energy constraints, formal attention can not be directed toward the stress resulting from the socialization process. The educator's focus remains that of imparting the knowledge and technical skills necessary to the delivery of quality nursing care and, therefore, the student is left with the immense task of managing a high level of stress.

OBJECTIVES

Two specific objectives were addressed by this project:

1. The development of a curriculum for a series of group sessions designed to assist the student in the socialization process of becoming a nurse.

July and August, 1983 were used to develop the curriculum for this series of group sessions which are designated as 'Discussion Time'. The focus of these sessions is upon the student developing self-awareness as a person and as an evolving nurse. Specific plans/procedures for the ten monthly sessions evolved from this curriculum development. Operational plans needed to accomplish each of the eight objectives for Discussion Time are a product of this curriculum development during July and August, 1983 (see copy of final product of curriculum for Discussion Time).

2. The implementation of a curriculum for a series of group sessions designed to assist the student in the socialization process of becoming a nurse.

The meeting times for the sessions were determined jointly by students, faculty, and consultant. First year students met as a group once a month for an hour session of Discussion Time throughout both fall and spring semesters. Second year students also met as a group for an hour session of Discussion Time throughout the ten months of the academic year. The first monthly session was in August, 1983 and the last monthly session was in May, 1984.

Because the socialization process occurs throughout the student's academic career, ideally the time required to meet each of the eight objectives for Discussion Time will be two academic years. Opportunities for learning in regard to each objective were therefore introduced to first year students on a very basic level. Second year students were exposed

to learning activities which again related to objectives, adding depth and breadth to each of the objectives. Much of the continuity, sequencing, and integration were effectively achieved by the students own experiences throughout their academic careers.

Various techniques were utilized to meet each of the objectives. Exercises, questionnaires, experiments, small and large group discussions, diaries, and experiences served to provide opportunities for self-learning. The consultant functioned as a facilitator/guide in the student's activities throughout the sessions (see copy of final product of curriculum for Discussion Time).

POPULATION AND SAMPLE

Since it was the author's goal to develop and implement a curriculum designed to assist the associate degree nursing student in the socialization process of becoming a nurse, it was decided to sample a population which as a group was quite heterogenous, except for the status of being in an associate degree nursing program.

It was decided to obtain a sample of thirty-eight nursing students at East Central College. All the students in both the class of 1984 and the class of 1985 were invited to participate in the project.

All subjects participating in this project understood the nature of the project and agreed to be participants.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The development and implementation of a curriculum for a series of group sessions designed to assist the student in the socialization process of becoming a nurse was accomplished in this project. These sessions were designated as 'Discussion Time'. The focus of these sessions was upon the student developing self-awareness as a person and as an evolving nurse.

The purpose of Discussion Time was multi-faceted. It provided time and opportunity for students to explore and define the many aspects of their personalities as they encountered new experiences, offering the necessary circumstances to encourage self-learning. Discussion Time served as a forum for airing conflicts inherent in the socialization process and developing a mutual support group to enhance the management of those conflicts. Because students were all in a similar situation, they profited from the group experience. They were able to empathize, criticize, and support each other as they learned, together, more about themselves and how to manage the stresses of life and living.

The goal of Discussion Time was the facilitation of the socialization process. The accomplishment of this goal should be reflected in the enhancement of the student's performance throughout his/her academic career, in an effective transition from school to work, and ultimately, in the delivery of quality nursing care as a registered nurse.

While it was not the intent of this project to measure the effectiveness of Discussion Time, reactions to the group sessions were generally favorable. Feedback from students supported the perceptions of the author/consultant, that while the socialization process remains an extremely difficult task, Discussion Time did ease the strain and inherent anxiety. It would be most useful to investigate the degree to which Discussion Time does facilitate the socialization process. A future projecting encompassing systematized re-

research might well provide valuable information regarding Discussion Time and its effectiveness.

Assuming that nursing is an art as well as a science, then as such its strengths lie in the strength of the successful socialization of the individual nurse. Yet, to date there is little empirical data that attempts to quantify or qualify the transformations that the student undergoes while attaining professional socialization. With increased recognition and description personality changes, students and faculty would have more awareness into the professional socialization process. This would undoubtedly further the growth and learning of nursing students.

The need for additional data regarding the socialization process is evident. Hopefully, the results of further studies about the process of socialization would not only add to the nursing knowledge base, but would be instrumental in making organizational plans and curriculum design in educational settings. The obtained information could also be useful in revising recruitment procedures and selection criteria of students, promoting student retention in nursing programs. The overall outcome would result in the education of the kind of nurse who is able to successfully carry out his/her professional responsibilities in meeting societal health care needs.

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